Dear Ms. Hoffman-Floerke,

I am writing to offer my comments on the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for the Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program.

There is no question that California must take action at the Salton Sea. A shrinking Salton Sea would subject the residents of Imperial and Coachella valleys to hundreds of additional tons of harmful dust each year that would be blown off the exposed land. A smaller, saltier sea also would be of little or no value to many of the 400 species of birds that currently use the sea. With the loss of nearly 95 percent of California?s wetlands, many of these birds would have no other place to go, leading to catastrophic losses.

Fortunately, a successful plan can be pieced together from the proposed alternatives in the draft report. I therefore urge your department to combine the following features from the proposed alternatives into a final preferred alternative to restore the Salton Sea:

** as described in Alternatives 1 and 2, include 38,000 to 50,000 acres of shallow habitat for shoreline species at the southern and northern ends of the sea;

** as described in Alternative 4, create concentric rings using geotubes or other dirt-filled barriers to provide additional shallow habitat, deeper marine habitat, shoreline and view protection, air quality protections and recreation opportunities;

** similar to the lakes found in Alternatives 5 through 7, provide a large (approximately 10,000-acre) North Lake, which would be the largest recreational lake in southern California, fed by the Whitewater River to provide recreation and development opportunities without the costs and risks associated with a major mid-sea barrier or the costs of pumping water from the southern end of the sea;

** as described in Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8, provide at least one-half acre-foot of water per acre of exposed seabed to prevent dust pollution; and

** as described in all of the proposed alternatives, construct shallow saline habitat (known as "early start habitat") immediately to provide resources for birds during the long permitting and construction process.

A final preferred alternative that includes all of these components, each of which is present and analyzed in one or more of the draft alternatives, would best meet the legal requirements to maximize habitat, air quality and water quality, while also providing substantial recreation and development opportunities.